

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-17

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1914

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E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJECT: AMERICAN BUSINESS CONCERN WITH KIDNAPPING IN ARGENTINA

REF: STATE 080528

1. SUMMARY: REPRESENTATIVES OF U. S. FIRM WHOSE APPROACH TO DEPARTMENT WAS SUBJECT OF REFTEL ARE OBVIOUSLY POORLY INFORMED RE CURRENT REALITIES IN ARGENTINA. CONTRARY TO IMPRESSION GIVEN BY THEM, EMBASSY HAS FOR MANY MONTHS BEEN IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH BOTH AMERICAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND GOA LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES. END OF SUMMARY.

2. EMBASSY OFFICERS UP TO AND INCLUDING AMBASSADOR AND DCM HAVE MET FREQUENTLY WITH U. S. BUSINESSMEN TO DISCUSS, BRIEF AND PROVIDE COUNSEL ON TERRORISM IN ARGENTINA AND ITS ATTENDANT PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS. EMBASSY STAFF INSTRUCTIONS ON RECOMMENDED SECURITY MEASURES ARE DISTRIBUTED (WITHOUT ATTRIBUTION) TO BUSINESS COMMUNITY FAMILIES THROUGH CHAMBER. EMBASSY SECURITY OFFICIALS ARE ALWAYS AVAILABLE TO THEM FOR CONSULTATION ON GENERAL PROBLEMS AND HAVE MET WITH SECURITY OFFICERS OF SOME LARGER AMERICAN FIRMS. RELATIVELY FEW, HOWEVER, HAVE CHOSEN TO USE THIS PROFFERED ASSISTANCE. (IT SHOULD BE NOTED HERE, HOWEVER, THAT STATE DEPARTMENT SY POLICY PRECLUDES USE OF SY PERSONNEL AS SECURITY ADVISERS IN DETAIL- FORMULATION OF SECURITY PLANS FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SPECIFIC PLANTS, ETC.- FOR NON- GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL.) EMBASSY HAS PROVIDED U. S. BUSINESS COMMUNITY WITH LISTS OF LOCAL FIRMS PROVIDING SECURITY SERVICES SUCH AS GUARDS, PATROLS, ETC. IN ADDITION, CONSUL GENERAL BISHTON SPEAKS REGULARLY TO NEW- COMERS TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY ON SUCH MATTERS AS PERSONAL SECURITY. WHEN EMBASSY HAS REASON TO BELIEVE THREAT OF TERRORISTIC ACTS IN GREATER THAN USUAL, U. S. BUSINESS COMMUNITY, THROUGH THE CHAMBER AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS, IS ALERTED ALONG WITH EMBASSY PERSONNEL THROUGH " CHAIN CALL" SYSTEM SET UP ON EMBASSY RECOMMENDATION. EMBASSY DOES NOT UNDERSTAND REFERENCE TO " SIGNIFICANT SUMS" IN 1 A OF REFTEL. U. S. GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS PRECLUDE EXTENSION OF EMBASSY CONTRACT PATROL SYSTEM IN SUBURBS TO NON- OFFICIAL AMERICANS, BUT MANY AMERICAN FIRMS AND INDIVIDUALS ALREADY HAVE CONTRACTED LOCALLY FOR SECURITY GUARDS.

3. RE 1 B: TARGETS OF TERRORISTS IN ARGENTINA ARE NOT RESTRICTED TO U. S. COMMUNITY. IN FACT, OTHER FOREIGN NATIONALS, SUCH AS BRITISH, DUTCH AND ITALIANS, AND ARGENTINES THEMSELVES, HAVE BEEN TARGETS FAR MORE OFTEN TO DATE THAN AMERICANS. THUS FAR ONLY ONE AMERICAN CITIZEN AND TWO ARGENTINE EMPLOYEES OF AMERICAN COMPANIES HAVE BEEN VICTIMS OF TERRORIST KIDNAPPINGS. SIZE OF FOREIGN BUSINESS COMMUNITY FAR TOO LARGE TO ENABLE GOA TO PROVIDE SPECIAL PROTECTION TO ALL OR ANY PARTICULAR GROUP WITHIN IT. BUSINESS COMMUNITY ENJOYS SAME RIGHTS AND GUARANTEES THAT ALL ARGENTINES HAVE AND GOA OBLIGATIONS UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW DO NOT EXTEND FURTHER, EVEN IF IT WERE ABLE TO PROVIDE SUCH PROTECTION. THE FACT IS THAT ALL ARGENTINE RESIDENTS (PRIVATE AND OFFICIAL ARGENTINES, FOREIGN BUSINESS AND OTHER GROUPS AND FOREIGN DIPLOMATS) LIVE UNDER THIS THREAT. IT IS NOT A QUESTION OF APPLYING PRESSURE ON THE GOA FOR GREATER PROTECTION. THERE IS NO SUBJECT OF GREATER CONCERN TO THE GOA AT PRESENT THAN TERRORISM, BUT GOA, LIKE MANY GOVERNMENTS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, HAS NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO FIND AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO CONTROL IT, DESPITE GREAT EXPENDITURES OF TIME, MONEY AND EFFORT.

4. RE 1 C: U. S. NARCOTICS AGENTS ARE NOT PARALLEL CASE. GOA HAS NOT REQUESTED U. S. ASSISTANCE IN FIELD OF TERRORISM. AS DEPARTMENT FULLY AWARE, EXPERIENCE ELSEWHERE HAS AMPLY DEMONSTRATED THAT THIS IS EXTREMELY DELICATE FIELD, IN LOCAL CIRCUMSTANCES, AND U. S. INTERESTS NOT NECESSARILY BEST SERVED BY THIS KIND OF INVOLVEMENT.

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5. RE 1 D: CONSUL GENERAL AND LEGAL ATTACHE ARE MEMBERS U. S. SCHOOL BOARD AND THROUGH THEM SECURITY MEASURES HAVE BEEN RECOMMENDED TO AND ADOPTED BY THE SCHOOL. EMBASSY SECURITY GUIDANCE TO AMERICANS INCLUDES MEASURES DIRECTED SPECIFICALLY TO PROTECTION OF CHILDREN. WE ARE NOW PROVIDING UPDATED BRIEFING

AND ADVICE IN RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC REQUEST MAY 4 TO DCM FROM SCHOOL HEADMASTER. EXPERIENCE TO DATE AND EMBASSY INTELLIGENCE INDICATES CHILDREN UNLIKELY TO BE TARGETS OF TERRORISTS, ALTHOUGH SOME ARGENTINE CHILDREN, USUALLY OF LOCAL CELEBRITIES OR WEALTHY ENTREPRENEURS, HAVE BEEN SEIZED AND HELD FOR RANSOM BY HOODLUMS WHOSE MOTIVES ARE MONETARY RATHER THAN POLITICAL.

6. MAJOR PROBLEM IN EMBASSY RELATIONS WITH AMERICAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY ON SECURITY MATTERS HAS BEEN LATTER'S RELUCTANCE TO WORK CLOSELY WITH FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL POLICE. RELUCTANCE HAS BEEN AGGRAVATED IN TWO ISOLATED CASES BY MISUNDERSTANDING AND WHAT APPEARED TO BE POLICE INEPTNESS WHEN COMPANIES SOUGHT POLICE ASSISTANCE AT EMBASSY RECOMMENDATION. THUS, WHEN KIDNAPPINGS OCCUR, COMPANIES GO TO SOME LENGTHS TO AVOID POLICE INTERFERENCE. WE WILL CONTINUE OUR EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT MORE PRODUCTIVE RELATIONS BETWEEN AMERICAN BUSINESS AND POLICE ORGANIZATIONS, SINCE WE BELIEVE POLICE, PARTICULARLY FEDERAL, HAVE DESIRE AND CAPABILITY TO BE OF CONSIDERABLE HELP TO AMERICAN COMPANIES.

7. AS INDICATED ABOVE, EMBASSY HAS BEEN TAKING ACTIONS REQUESTED IN PARAGRAPH 3 REFTTEL SINCE TERRORISM FIRST BECAME A MATTER OF CONCERN HERE THREE YEARS AGO. EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE TO BRIEF AND ADVISE AMERICAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY TO EXTENT ITS RESOURCES AND AUTHORITY PERMIT.
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